



EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY

A child's early years are the foundation for their future development, providing a strong base for lifelong learning and learning abilities including cognitive and social development.

Introduction

This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at Boyne Hill CE Infant & Nursery School. It outlines our intentions in delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage and how we implement this within our provision. The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of practitioners working in the EYFS classes, including both teaching and non-teaching staff, and will be monitored by the Head Teacher and EYFS lead.

Children can join Foundation Stage 1 (FS1/Nursery) in the term after they turn three, with intakes offered in September and January. Alternatively, children can enter Foundation Stage 2 (FS2/Reception) from September of the academic year in which they will turn five years old.

Our curriculum for the pupils in FS1 and FS2 at Boyne Hill CE Infant & Nursery School is delivered in accordance with the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework (2021). This shapes our practice to ensure the children are able to flourish.

Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage

At Boyne Hill CE Infant & Nursery School, we believe that all pupils are entitled to the best possible start in their school life, both intellectually and emotionally, to enable them to develop their full potential.

We aim to support each pupil's welfare, learning and developmental needs by:

- recognising that all children are unique and special
- understanding that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates - physically, cognitively, linguistically, socially and emotionally
- providing a safe, secure and caring environment where our pupils feel happy and know that they are valued by the practitioners looking after them
- fostering and nurturing our pupils' self-confidence, independence and self-esteem through their developing awareness of their own identity and role within the community, establishing the early principles of British and Christian values that permeate throughout our school
- teaching our pupils to express and communicate their needs and feelings in appropriate ways
- encouraging independence and decision-making, supporting our pupils to learn through their mistakes
- developing pupils' understanding of social skills and the values and codes of behaviour required for people to work together harmoniously
- supporting pupils to develop care, respect and appreciation for others, including those with beliefs, cultures and opinions which differ from their own
- understanding the importance of play in children's learning and development
- providing learning experiences in play which reflect our pupils' personal interests and areas of curiosity in order to encourage and develop their natural desire, interest, excitement and motivation to learn
- providing experiences which build on our pupils' existing knowledge and understanding in order to challenge, stimulate and extend their learning and development
- providing effective learning opportunities in a range of environments, inside and outside

- working collaboratively with parents and carers in supporting the holistic development of their children

The Early Years Foundation Stage framework has four overarching principles which guide and shape our practice in both Foundation Stage 1 and Foundation Stage 2 and we place strong importance on the 'characteristics of effective learning' which support effective teaching and learning. There are seven areas of learning and development that shape our early years' curriculum, all of which are important and inter-connected.

Educational opportunities in the setting always involve activities and experiences from these seven areas and it is through these learning opportunities that children's physical, cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional development occurs. No one aspect of development stands in isolation from the others as all areas of learning and development are closely intertwined. This ensures the delivery of a holistic, child-centred curriculum which allows children to make links in their learning with each being given equal weighting and value.

Intent

In our Foundation Stage, we aim to provide the highest quality care and education for all our pupils, giving them a strong foundation for future learning. Our pupils will feel valued, nurtured, be self-confident, curious, self-regulated and happy and have a thirst for learning that will last a lifetime. We have encompassed the school values and have created a safe, motivational, inclusive and knowledgeable team where children are happy and in a nurturing environment, making learning experiences that enable them to become confident and independent. We value the individual child and work alongside families to support and meet their needs so that every child has the best future life chances.

Implementation

We plan an exciting and challenging curriculum based on our observation of our pupils' needs, interests and stages of development, across the seven areas of learning and development, all of which are important and inter-connected. The three prime areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. These are:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development.

As pupils move through the EYFS and become more secure in the prime areas, the four specific areas are developed in line with pupils' individual needs. These are:

- Literacy
- Maths
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

Pupils are provided with a range of rich, meaningful first-hand experiences both indoors and outdoors to encourage exploration, creativity and active learning. We aim to develop positive attitudes towards learning, confidence, communication and physical development.

Medium term plans are topic based. They offer diverse experiences in all seven areas and reflect the learning experiences needed as an outcome of assessment and observation. We also follow the children's interests where appropriate. These plans then inform our short-term weekly planning which is based on observations, pupils' interests and topical issues.

Our curriculum is flexible and it allows us to meet the needs of each cohort. This means that topics do not stay the same each school year but are developed and adapted to meet the needs of the current cohort. We supplement resources and opportunities for pupils to follow their interests and our activities encompass those that are child initiated, adult supported and adult led. Our continuous provision is enhanced to support pupils in all aspects of their learning.

Foundation Stage 1

In FS1, the children have lots of time to explore in a safe environment, to develop in the 3 prime areas and to be exposed to the 4 specific areas too. Physical, communication and emotional development is at the core, working closely with parents and carers as many of the children leave their home environments for the first time. The adults are skilled at working with our youngest children, nurturing them from whatever their starting points are. There is ample time for play and exploration both inside and out and opportunities to work in different sized groups depending on the needs and interests of the cohort.

Language and communication are paramount and the children are exposed to a rich environment so they develop a love of learning and staff ensure that they really get the greatest impact from their daily 3-hours entitlement. The curriculum is developmental, diverse, challenging, rich, exciting, spiral and fluid whilst also ensuring that the children get the experiences necessary to their age and stage where they can have additional support and opportunities to follow particular interests whilst developing secure relationships with others. The adults are able to assess the children in their play and activities without this causing a negative workload so the adults are fresh and keen to support each child in their next steps of learning.

Foundation Stage 2

In FS2, we are able to build on previous experiences whether from our Nursery or from other settings. We continue to be play based in our approach with the child very much at the centre but we are now able to offer continued broadening of experiences and opportunities whilst continuing to practice and develop previously learnt skills and experiences. Settling in is very important and this can take time. We very much work on helping the children and their families to feel safe and settled as we know that happy children learn.

Learning can be fast paced and the adults are skilled at assessing and providing immediate activities to support each child so they can all flourish. Children have whole class, small group and individual sessions throughout the day and this will vary according to need, interests and assessments made. There is also plenty of time for them to follow their own lines of enquiry and to build on those prime and specific areas which all require practice and embedding and the opportunity to become deeply involved.

We have daily phonics lessons following the DfE validated Reading Planet Rocket Phonics Systematic Synthetic Phonics Programme. Adult initiated activities include reading, writing, maths, creative activities, opportunities to investigate our personal histories and the wider world. We explore different beliefs and practices and people who have made a big impact on our world. This is a balanced curriculum offering the children vital experiences whilst also being able to follow the wealth of interests each cohort brings. There are regular opportunities for the development of gross and fine motor skills. Emotional support and self-regulation are central and we support the children in developing their skills of metacognition to have ownership of their learning and to develop strategies to support how they learn. We aim for our pupils to be confident, resilient and active in their learning. The nature of these activities develop and change as children move through EYFS.

Outdoor learning

Both FS1 and FS2 have continual access to two designated outside learning environments. Having the opportunity to learn outside is central to our play based pedagogy and children are able to benefit from time outside. This improves physical skills; develops resilience and social skills; forges new relationships and develops children's vestibular systems. We are able to access maths on a larger scale outdoors and develop a wider vocabulary as well as learning about the cyclical pattern of nature and the human responsibility to take care of our natural world. Our outside spaces enrich all 7 areas of the EYFS curriculum, with a focus on literacy; maths; understanding the world and expressive arts and design. The outside areas are open regardless of the weather and children are given the choice to free-flow between inside and outside throughout the sessions.

Safety, wellbeing and involvement

Children's safety and welfare is paramount and we have policies, procedures and documents in place to support this. We create a safe and secure environment and provide a curriculum which teaches pupils how to be safe, make choices and assess risks. We use the Leuven Scales of Wellbeing and Involvement to support our pupils. We realise that levels of wellbeing can vary so we regularly monitor and support as necessary. This can be

through a variety of method and we are fortunate to have an emotional literacy support assistant (ELSA) working in FS2. She is able to bespoke activities and support according to the needs of the pupils. In regards to involvement, we want the children to be 'busy bees, rather than butterflies'.

Inclusion

We value all our pupils as individuals. We plan a curriculum that meet the needs of individual children, follows their interests and supports them at their own pace so that they can make effective progress towards the early learning goals. Our personalised approach means that we can identify any additional needs early and support pupils and families.

We promote equality of opportunity and provide early intervention for those pupils who require it, through our personalised approach. We work in partnership with parents and carers and we plan challenging learning experiences informed by high quality formative assessment observations alongside our pupils' interests. We provide opportunities for both adult-initiated and child-initiated learning, sustained shared thinking and scaffolding, thus providing a secure, stimulating and safe learning environment indoors and outdoors.

Parents as partners

We understand that parents and carers know their children best and if we can create and maintain a partnership together, we can have a significant impact on a child's learning. We acknowledge the wonderful wealth of information that can be accessed from the parents and carers and greatly value this partnership in order to develop a holistic view of each child. We welcome and actively encourage parents to participate confidently in their child's education and care in numerous ways. An overview of our weekly activities and ways to support and consolidate learning at home are sent home weekly as well as posted on the class page of the website.

When the children are ready, decodable books are sent home for them to share and parents or carers can write comments in the yellow reading record. We keep parents informed on their child's learning through two interim reports (Autumn and Spring) with feedback, suggested next steps and comments made by the children. At the end of FS2, a report is sent home with the assessments against the statutory Early Learning Goals, stating if a child has achieved or not yet achieved these goals. We have three Parent Consultation meetings a year which can be virtual if preferred and we offer 'stay and play' sessions for parents and carers as well as other opportunities to come and work with the children in school. Parents have access to their child's teacher through email but we very much have an open door policy to try and make it easy for parents and teachers to chat.

Before each child starts school, we make contact with families and current settings and try to meet the children if we can. We also invite all our parents to an information sharing sessions prior to starting in both FS1 and FS2.

In line with Key Stage 1, we offer curriculum information sessions on early reading and writing so parents can be kept informed of how children learn. Working with other services and organisations is integral to our practice in order to meet the needs of our children. At times, we may need to share information with other professionals to provide the best support possible but we will always do this with parental agreement.

Transitions

At any transition point, we acknowledge the pupils' needs and establish effective partnerships with those involved - with the children and other settings, including nurseries and childminders. Children attend introductory sessions to FS1 and FS2 to develop familiarity with the setting and staff. Teachers visit the new FS2 children in their nurseries before they start school.

Staff involved within the EYFS develop good relationships with all the children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them. It is a statutory duty that a key person is allocated for all children in Foundation Stage 1 and 2 whilst the class teacher oversees the development and learning of all children in the setting. In the final term in FS2 (Reception), the Year 1 and early years' staff meet to discuss each child's development against the early learning goals in order to support a smooth transition to Year 1. This discussion enables the new teachers to plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet the needs of all pupils.

Impact

At its core, assessment in our Early Years' Foundation Stage at Boyne Hill reflects our curriculum intent. It informs planning, next steps and curriculum development so we can best enable our pupils to achieve.

Baseline assessments: The EYFS statutory framework requires a baseline assessment of each pupil within the first few weeks of entering FS2. Reports are generated which can help to see where each child is in their learning. This then helps to feed into our own assessment tool which is adapted for use in FS1 also, enabling us to track, monitor and make sure that all pupils are flourishing. We can spot trends and those who may require some further activities to support them to make progress.

Day to day formative assessment: We use this type of assessment to inform teaching on an ongoing daily basis. This assessment is based upon the class teacher's professional knowledge of what the pupil knows and can do. As an EYFS team, we record useful observations which can be gathered during child-led learning time or during routine interactions such as adult led sessions. They help to highlight those children who may need some immediate additional support or may have misconceptions which need attending to.

When it comes to next steps, the EYFS team will reflect on the skills and understanding that the pupil or pupils demonstrate in the course of everyday learning to plan what to teach next. When a child's learning is embedded, it will be seen consistently in a range of situations.

In-setting summative assessment: This assessment is used to understand a child's performance at the end of a period of teaching and is measured against the intended learning outcomes. Informal, summative assessments are interconnected meaning that pupils are likely to demonstrate attainment in more than one area of learning during an observation. These assessments generally take place during the day to day activities so it is a normal activity for the pupils and puts no further pressure on teacher workload.

Statutory summative assessment at the end of FS2: The EYFS profile assessment is carried out in the final term of the year in which a child reaches age 5. It is intended to provide a reliable, valid and accurate assessment of each child's development at the end of the EYFS. It is made up of an assessment of the child's outcomes in relation to the 17 early learning goal (ELG) descriptors. Teachers use their professional judgement to make these assessments based on their knowledge and understanding of what the child knows, understands and can do.

Pupils are defined as having reached a Good Level of Development (GLD) at the end of the EYFS if they have achieved at least the expected level for the ELGs in the prime areas of learning and the specific areas of mathematics and literacy. This helps teachers and parents or carers to understand broadly what their child can do in relation to national expectations. In addition, the EYFS profile provides a national child learning and development data set at the end of the EYFS.

This policy will be reviewed biennially

Last reviewed: August 2024